



February 19, 2015

## **HB 5521: AN ACT REQUIRING LICENSURE OF MASTER'S LEVEL PSYCHOLOGISTS**

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee:

As Director of Professional Affairs of the Connecticut Psychological Association (CPA), and a licensed clinical psychologist with a private practice in Woodbridge, I am writing to offer CPA's **strong opposition to HB 5521**, for the following 3 reasons:

- 1) The term "psychologist" reflects doctoral level providers (both in Connecticut and on a national level);
- 2) Allowing licensure of master's level psychologists would create public confusion regarding provider education and training; and,
- 3) Master's level clinicians are currently able to become licensed in Connecticut as LPC's.

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Sections 20-187a and 20-188, the practice of psychology and utilization of the words "*psychologist, psychological or psychology*" can only be used by *doctoral level providers*. The relevant statutory sections, in pertinent part, are provided below:

**Section 20-187a. License required. Practice defined.** No person shall practice psychology unless he has obtained a license as provided in section 20-188. The practice of psychology means the rendering of professional services under any title or description of services incorporating the words **psychologist, psychological or psychology**...

**Section 20-188. Examination; qualifications.** Before granting a license to a psychologist, the department shall, except as provided in section 20-190, require any applicant therefor to pass an examination in psychology prescribed by the department with the advice and consent of the board. *Each applicant* shall pay a fee of five hundred sixty five dollars, and shall satisfy the department that such applicant (1) *has received the* **doctoral degree** based on a program of studies whose content was primarily psychological from an educational approved in accordance with section 20-189; ...

As doctoral level providers, psychologists' education and training includes a minimum of 4 years of academic and clinical work, as well as a one-year full-time pre-doctoral internship, in order to be awarded a doctoral degree. Licensure in Connecticut requires an additional one-year, full-time, post-doctoral fellowship.



When seeking a mental health provider, many state residents are already confused by the array of mental health licensure categories and designations. One thing remains clear: psychologists are doctoral level providers. Allowing master's level providers to call themselves "psychologists" would create further confusion regarding provider education, training and qualifications.

Importantly, *Section 20-195dd(a)(2) of the Connecticut General Statutes expressly provides for licensure of applicants who have earned a master's degree in psychology as "licensed professional counselors"*.

Moreover, the national trend has been towards reserving the term "psychologist" for doctoral professionals, in order to avoid consumer confusion. West Virginia is the only state which allows master's level providers to call themselves simply "psychologists", and that state's psychological association is working hard to correct this confusing use of the title. In recent years, Arkansas, Kansas, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and Tennessee have stopped licensing master's level psychologists.<sup>1</sup>

This bill does not impact school psychologists, as they are under the authority of the Department of Education.

In summary, the term "psychologist" refers to doctoral level providers in Connecticut, and in every state except West Virginia. Allowing licensure of master's level psychologists would create public confusion regarding education and training of providers. Moreover, master's level clinicians are already able to obtain licensure as a "Licensed Professional Counselor" (LPC) under Connecticut statutory law.

Accordingly, **CPA strongly urges you to oppose HB 5521.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Traci Cipriano, JD, PhD  
Director of Professional Affairs

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<sup>1</sup> Four other states allow for the independent licensure of master's level providers (Oregon, Kentucky, Vermont and Kansas); however, providers in those states are not referred to as psychologists but rather as "psychologist associate", "psychologist-masters", "licensed clinical psychotherapist" or "licensed psychological practitioner". Of these 4 states, Kansas and Kentucky do not use the term "psychologist." A number of states outside of New England (with the exception of Maine) and the Tri-State area allow licensure *with supervision* (by a licensed psychologist) of individuals with a master's degree in psychology, often called a "psychological associate" or "psychological examiner." CPA opposes this as well, for the 3 reasons set forth at the beginning of this testimony.